









HIDE AND SEEK
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

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TO H. F. M.

A SONNET IN SUNLIGHT

THIS IS a day for sonnets: Oh how clear
Our splendid cliffs and summits lift the gaze—
If all the perfect moments of the year
Were poured and gathered in one sudden blaze,
Then, then perhaps, in some endowered phrase
My flat, strewn words would rise and come more near
To tell of you. Your beauty and your praise
Would fall like sunlight on this paper here.

*Then I would build a sonnet that would stand
Proud and perennial on this pale bright sky;
So tall, so steep, that it might stay the hand
Of Time, the dusty wrecker. He would sigh
To tear my strong words down. And he would say:
“That song he built for her, one summer day.”*

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Roslyn, Long Island,
July, 1920

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PART ONE: VERSES

HIDE AND SEEK

TAKING TITLE

TO make this house my very own
Could not be done by law alone.
Though covenant and deed convey
Absolute fee, as lawyers say,
There are domestic rites beside
By which this house is sanctified.

By kindled fire upon the hearth,
By planted pansies in the garth,
By food, and by the quiet rest
Of those brown eyes that I love best,
And by a friend's bright gift of wine,
I dedicate this house of mine.

When all but I are soft abed
I trail about my quiet stead
A wreath of blue tobacco smoke
(A charm that evil never broke)

HIDE AND SEEK

TAKING TITLE—(continued)

And bring my ritual to an end
By giving shelter to a friend.

These done, O dwelling, you become
Not just a house, but truly Home!

TO AN OLD-FASHIONED POET

(Lizette Woodworth Reese.)

MOST tender poet, when the gods confer
They save your gracile songs a nook apart,
And bless with Time's untainted lavender
The ageless April of your singing heart.

You, in an age unbridled, ne'er declined
The appointed patience that the Muse decrees,
Until, deep in the flower of the mind
The hovering words alight, like bridegroom bees.

By casual praise or casual blame unstirred
The placid gods grant gifts where they belong:
To you, who understand, the perfect word,
The recompensed necessities of song.

BURNING LEAVES IN SPRING

WHEN withered leaves are lost in flame
Their eddying ghosts, a thin blue haze,
Blow through the thickets whence they came
On amberlucent autumn days.

The cool green woodland heart receives
Their dim, dissolving, phantom breath;
In young hereditary leaves
They see their happy life-in-death.

My minutes perish as they glow—
Time burns my crazy bonfire through;
But ghosts of blackened hours still blow,
Eternal Beauty, back to you!

THE SAVAGE

CIVILIZATION causes me
Alternate fits: disgust and glee.

Buried in piles of glass and stone
My private spirit moves alone,

Where every day from eight to six
I keep alive by hasty tricks.

But I am simple in my soul;
My mind is sullen to control.

At dusk I smell the scent of earth,
And I am dumb—too glad for mirth.

I know the savors night can give,
And then, and then, I live, I live!

No man is wholly pure and free,
For that is not his destiny,

HIDE AND SEEK

THE SAVAGE—(continued)

But though I bend, I will not break:
And still be savage, for Truth's sake.

God damns the easily convinced
(Like Pilate, when his hands he rinsed).

ST. PAUL'S AND WOOLWORTH

I STOOD on the pavement
Where I could admire
Behind the brown chapel
The cream and gold spire.

Above, gilded Lightning
Swam high on his ball—
I saw the noon shadow
The church of St. Paul.

And was there a meaning?
(My fancy would run),
Saint Paul in the shadow,
Saint Frank in the sun!

ADVICE TO A CITY

O CITY, cage your poets! Hem them in
And roof them over from the April sky—
Clatter them round with babble, ceaseless din,
And drown their voices with your thunder cry.

Forbid their free feet on the windy hills,
And harness them to daily ruts of stone—
(In florists' windows lock the daffodils)
And never, never let them be alone!

For they are curst, said poets, curst and lewd,
And freedom gives their tongues uncanny wit,
And granted silence, thought and solitude
They (*absit omen!*) might make Song of it.

So cage them in, and stand about them thick,
And keep them busy with their daily bread;
And should their eyes seem strange, ah, then be
quick
To interrupt them ere the word be said. . . .

For, if their hearts burn with sufficient rage,
With wasted sunsets and frustrated youth,
Some day they'll cry, on some disturbing page,
The savage, sweet, unpalatable truth!

TO LOUISE

(A Christmas Baby, Now One Year Old.)

UNDAUNTED by a world of grief,
You came upon perplexing days,
And cynics doubt their disbelief
To see the sky-stains in your gaze.

Your sudden and inclusive smile
And your emphatic tears, admit
That you must find this life worth while,
So eagerly you clutch at it!

Your face of triumph says, brave mite,
That life is full of love and luck—
Of blankets to kick off at night,
And two soft rose-pink thumbs to suck.

O loveliest of pioneers
Upon this trail of long surprise,
May all the stages of the years
Show such enchantment in your eyes!

HIDE AND SEEK

TO LOUISE—(continued)

By parents' patient buttonings,
And endless safety pins, you'll grow
To ribbons, garters, hooks and things,
Up to the Ultimate Trousseau—

But never, in your dainty prime,
Will you be more adored by me
Than when you see, this Great First Time,
Lit candles on a Christmas Tree!

December, 1919.

THE MUSIC BOX

AT SIX—long ere the wintry dawn—
There sounded through the silent hall
To where I lay, with blankets drawn
Above my ears, a plaintive call.

The Urchin, in the eagerness
Of three years old, could not refrain;
Awake, he straightway yearned to dress
And frolic with his clockwork train.

I heard him with a sullen shock.
His sister, by her usual plan,
Had piped us aft at 3 o'clock—
I vowed to quench the little man.

I leaned above him, somewhat stern,
And spoke, I fear, with emphasis—
Ah, how much better, parents learn,
To seal one's censure with a kiss!

Again the house was dark and still,
Again I lay in slumber's snare,
When down the hall I heard a trill,
A tiny, tinkling, tuneful air—

THE MUSIC BOX—(continued)

His music-box! His best-loved toy,
His crib companion every night;
And now he turned to it for joy
While waiting for the lagging light.

How clear, and how absurdly sad
Those tingling pricks of sound unrolled;
They chirped and quavered, as the lad
His lonely little heart consoled.

Columbia, the Ocean's Gem—
(Its only tune) shrilled sweet and faint.
He cranked the chimes, admiring them
In vigil gay, without complaint.

The treble music piped and stirred,
The leaping air that was his bliss;
And, as I most contritely heard,
I thanked the all-unconscious Swiss!

The needled jets of melody
Rang slowlier and died away—
The Urchin slept; and it was I
Who lay and waited for the day.

A WEDDED VALENTINE

DEAR, may I be your Valentine?
Not just to-day, in weather fine;
Not just to-day, in lover's mood,
But through life's each vicissitude.

Not just when girlish eyes still shine,
Dear, may I be your Valentine,
But through all mortal whims and fits
While Time our human fibres knits.

And though, most sweet, my peevish earth
Is hardly such promotion worth,
Dear, may I be your Valentine
And learn to make your virtue mine?

Recalling by love's old refrain
Our double joy, divided pain,
I write this pleading, smiling line—
Dear, may I be your Valentine?

MEDITATION ON SOME BOOKSHELVES
SHORTLY TO BE BUILT

Assiduus sis in bibliotheca, quae tibi Paradisi loco est.

—Erasmus to Bishop Fisher.

FRIEND carpenter, *in re* those shelves of mine,
It matters little of what wood you build
them:

Seek out no oak or walnut; common pine,
Or cypress, will look well when I have filled them.

No doors of glass, or scroll-work done for looks;
No cornices, no carving, and no beading—
The ornaments of bookshelves are the books,
And mine are not for show, but all for reading.

The topmost shelf eight inches, if you please,
To hold my dumpy twelves and my 16mos;
The others measured taller by degrees
For bigger books—like Adams and his keen *mots*.

And now, while all my volumes are still boxed
And stand about in dreary packing cases,
I'll think about their pages—clean or foxed—
And plan just how I'll put them in their places.

HIDE AND SEEK

MEDITATION ON BOOKSHELVES—(continued)

My “Everymans”—six feet of varied hue—
Chatto and Windus’ pocket R. L. S.’s—
The India-paper Boswell, fat and blue,
A noble bit of work from Oxford’s presses.

The small red Shakespeares—Robby Burns’s tunes—
My Bunyan, my “Urn Burial,” my Borrow—
The bright green Lamb (thin paper) made by
Newnes—
(I wish those shelves could be done by to-morrow!)

The tiny Omar from Southampton Row
Tensely inscribed with two sets of initials,
Which same (the first I gave Her, long ago)
Brought us at last to City Hall officials.

The Houghton-Mifflin Keats means much to me
(Bought from John Wanamaker, when a strip-
pling),
And Thomas Mosher’s grand facsimile
Of “Leaves of Grass” (the First)—and here’s my
Kipling!

“Vergilii Maronis Opera”
Imprinted 1873 at Leipsic;
My Goldsmith, stained with tea at Thompson’s Spa;
My Apperson on Smoking, when I’m pipe-sick.

MEDITATION ON BOOKSHELVES—(continued)

My "Bibelots," "World's Classics," and my "Bohns";

(I'd like to see those books again this minute!)

My Poe, in Baltimore (at Hochschild Kohn's)

I got for 19 cents—the mark is in it.

And does my Conrad go up here? He does.

And my McFee, whose writing is a strong man's.
And old Burnand, put out by Roberts Bros.,

And De la Mare, with the imprint of Longmans.

I must not start upon this theme again;

I will compose my longings unto slumber;
For Harry Smith says he can't tell just when
He'll get that much desiderated lumber.

But when brave Harry comes with wood and paints,

And in their nest my bairns are safely brooded,
I'll number o'er my literary saints,

And his good name will surely be included!

RAPID TRANSIT

(To Stephen Vincent Benét.)

CLIMBING is easy and swift on Parnassus!
Knocking my pipe out, I entered a bookshop;
There found a book of verse by a young poet.
Comrades at once, how I saw his mind glowing!
Saw in his soul its magnificent rioting—
Then I ran with him on hills that were windy,
Basked and laughed with him on sun-dazzled beaches,
Glutted myself on his green and blue twilights,
Watched him disposing his planets in patterns,
Tumbling his colors and toys all before him.
I questioned life with him, his pulses my pulses;
Doubted his doubts, too, and grieved for his an-
guishes,
Salted long kinship and knew him from boyhood—
Pulled out my own sun and stars from my knapsack,
Trying my trinkets with those of his finding—
And as I left the bookshop
My pipe was still warm in my hand.

THE VICTORIAN POET
IN HIS RONDOTAGE

I AM too old to be ensnared
By formless verse. For I first aired
My boyish lyre in Dobson's rule,
And taught myself in that strict school
To have my stanzas filed and pared.

How hopelessly for rhymes I stared!
But chipped and polished till I bared
The finer grain. Discard my tool?
I am too old.

I vote for verses craftsman-cared—
Landor'd, Dobson'd, De la Mare'd;
For rhyme is still the quiet pool
Where Beauty is reflected. You'll
Agree (as many have declared)
I am too old.

CAUGHT IN THE UNDERTOW

COLIN, worshipping some frail,
By self-deprecation sways her:
Calls himself unworthy male,
Hardly even fit to praise her.

But this tactic insincere
In the upshot greatly grieves him
When he finds the lovely dear
Quite implicitly believes him.

SUNDAY NIGHT

TWO grave brown eyes, severely bent
Upon a memorandum book—
A sparkling face, on which are blent
A hopeful and a pensive look;
A pencil, purse, and book of checks
With stubs for varying amounts—
Elaine, the shrewdest of her sex,
Is busy balancing accounts!

Sedately, in the big armchair,
She, all engrossed, the audit scans—
Her pencil hovers here and there
The while she calculates and plans;
What's this? A faintly pensive frown
Upon her forehead gathers now—
Ah, does the butcher—heartless clown—
Beget that shadow on her brow?

A murrain on the tradesman churl
Who caused this fair accountant's gloom!
Just then—a baby's cry—my girl
Arose and swiftly left the room.

HIDE AND SEEK.

SUNDAY NIGHT—(continued)

Then in her purse by stratagem
I thrust some bills of small amounts—
She'll think she had forgotten them,
And smile again at her accounts!

TO HIS BROWN-EYED MISTRESS

*Who Rallied Him for Praising Blue Eyes in His
Verses*

IF SOMETIMES, in a random phrase
(For variation in my ditty),
I chance blue eyes, or gray, to praise
And seem to intimate them pretty—

It is because I do not dare
With too unmixed reiteration
To sing the browner eyes and hair
That are my true intoxication.

Know, then, that I consider brown
For ladies' eyes, the only color;
And deem all other orbs in town
(Compared to yours), opaquer, duller.

I pray, perpend, my dearest dear;
While blue-eyed maids the praise were
drinking,
How insubstantial was their cheer—
It was of yours that I was thinking!

PEACE

WHAT is this Peace
That statesmen sign?
How I have sought
To make it mine.

Where groaning cities
Clang and glow
I hunted, hunted,
Peace to know.

And still I saw
Where I passed by
Discarded hearts,—
Heard children cry.

By willowed waters
Brimmed with rain
I thought to capture
Peace again.

I sat me down
My Peace to hoard,
But Beauty pricked me
With a sword.

PEACE—(continued)

For in the stillness
Something stirred,
And I was crippled
For a word.

There is no peace
A man can find;
The anguish sits
His heart behind.

The eyes he loves,
The perfect breast,
Too exquisite
To give him rest.

This is his curse
Since brain began.
His penalty
For being man.

MOUNTED POLICE

WATCHFUL, grave, he sits astride his
horse,
Draped with his rubber poncho, in the rain;
He speaks the pungent lingo of "The Force,"
And those who try to bluff him, try in vain.

Inured to every mood of fool and crank,
Shrewdly and sternly all the crowd he cons:
The rain drips down his horse's shining flank,
A figure nobly fit for sculptor's bronze.

O knight commander of our city stress,
Little you know how picturesque you are!
We hear you cry to drivers who transgress:
"Say, that's a helva place to park your car!"

SONG, IN DEPRECATION
OF PULCHRITUDE

BEAUTY (so the poets say),
Thou art joy and solace great;
Long ago, and far away
Thou art safe to contemplate,

Beauty. But when now and here,
Visible and close to touch,
All too perilously near,
Thou tormentest us too much!

In a picture, in a song,
In a novel's conjured scenes,
Beauty, that's where you belong,
Where perspective intervenes.

But, my dear, in rosy fact
Your appeal I have to shirk—
You distract me, and distract
My attention from my work!

ON A WHITE MUSLIN DRESS
IN A MODISTE'S WINDOW

DEMURE white frock which I espy,
What slender damsel will buy
This miracle of dainty dress
And grace it with her loveliness,
The bliss of every doting eye?

Upon a dummy figure lie
These tender folds, and seem to sigh
Some softer bosom to possess,
Demure white frock!

I can't resist. The price is high,
But my cigars I will deny;
I'll get the thing for you, dear Bess,
And when you wear it, I'll confess
How utterly entrancing I
Deem your white frock!

A VALENTINE

TO HER whose glamor moves and stirs
And bids me try to do her honor,
Whose peerless beauty made me hers
The first time I laid eyes upon her—
Whose profile thrilled my boyish dream
And made a shrine for youthful passion,
Whose magic is the chosen theme
Her lovers praise, each in his fashion—
Who turns her ever-changing face
To fit the moods that men bring to her,
And in her heart can find a place
For all who venturously woo her—
To her who, beautiful and great,
Deserves a more pretentious ditty—
To her, in love, I dedicate
This Valentine—to New York City!

IN RE ALFRED EMERY CATHIE

(To All Butlerians, but especially Moreby Acklom)

IN 1887, Alfred Cathie
Became the private clerk of Samuel Butler;
And Butler made a wise choice, for (i'faith!) he
Could ne'er have found a faithfuller or subtler.
For Butler, lord of satire and of whim,
Was not (we guess) the kind of man whom all
Would understand; but Alfred worshipped him,
And smiled at his *O God! O Montreal!*

O Cathie, liv'st thou still? Or art thou gone
The Way of All Flesh to *The Haven Fair*?
If so, we know that in some *Erewhon*
Thou find'st thy waggish master waiting there—
(For he who every mortal foible mocks
Would ask not Paradise, but Paradox.)
Cathie, the author of that deathless *mot*:
“Yes, there’s tobacco in it—you may go!”¹

¹ See “The Notebooks of Samuel Butler,” New Edition,
p. 251.

DAFFODILS

IF daffodils were merely yellow flowers,
It would not hurt my heart to see them
grow—

But ah, they speak to me of April hours
And gardened mornings now so long ago.

For daffodils are memory and token
Of vanished days too tender to be sung,
Before a single happy dream was broken
In my love's gentle heart when she was young,

TO HIS MISTRESS, DEPLORING THAT
HE IS NOT AN ELIZABETHAN GALAXY

WHY did not Fate to me bequeath an
Utterance Elizabethan?

It would have been delight to me
If *natus ante* 1603.

My stuff would not be soon forgotten
If I could write like Harry Wotton.

I wish that I could wield the pen
Like William Drummond of Hawthornden.

I would not fear the ticking clock
If I were Browne of Tavistock.

For blithe conceits I would not worry
If I were Raleigh, or the Earl of Surrey.

I wish (I hope I am not silly?)
That I could juggle words like Lylly.

I envy many a lyric champion,
I. e., viz., e. g., Thomas Campion.

TO HIS MISTRESS—(continued)

I creak my rhymes up like a derrick,
I ne'er will be a Robin Herrick.

My wits are dull as an old Barlow—
I wish that I were Christopher Marlowe.

In short, I'd like to be Philip Sidney,
Or some one else of that same kidney.

For if I were, my lady's looks
And all my lyric special pleading
Would be in all the future books,
And called, at college, *Required Reading*.

THE INTRUDER

AS I sat, to sift my dreaming
To the meet and needed word,
Came a merry Interruption
With insistence to be heard.

Smiling stood a maid beside me,
Half alluring and half shy;
Soft the white hint of her bosom—
Escapade was in her eye.

“I must not be so invaded,”
(In an anger then I cried)—
“Can’t you see that I am busy?
Tempting creature, stay outside!

“Pearly rascal, I am writing:
I am now composing verse—
Fie on antic invitation:
Wanton, vanish—fly—disperse!

“Baggage, in my godlike moment
What have I to do with thee?”
And she laughed as she departed—
“I am Poetry,” said she.

CONFessions IN A HASH-HOUSE

I'M THROUGH!

I Seven years I've worked at this hash coun-
ter,

Stooping down five hundred times a day
To shout down the dumb-waiter to Pete
(That Polack never pays any attention,
I can't get a thing I ask for)
And spilling a line of cheerful chatter
To my customers.

I should think men would get tired of kidding.

Those guys that are so particular,
Send back their scrambled eggs for another
three minutes,

Must have their tomatoes on a side dish
And not on the meat,
Gee, I'll bet when they're home
They take what comes to them
And shut up about it.

And I'll bet that the fresh guys
Who pull the jazz talk day after day
Have mighty little to say at home.

Men are a bunch of fakers:

CONFessions IN A HASH-HOUSE—(continued)

If I ever get one where I want him
I'll make him behave.
I'll bean him with a sad-iron.

I'm tired of kidding the bunch.
I'm tired of listening to their yap about what
they like
And what they don't like.
Just for a change I'd like to see some one
Come in here and order his lunch and eat it
Without trying to be funny about it.
If all this stooping wasn't so good for the figure
(But, oh, my back, by six p. m.!)
I'da quit long ago.

Well, girls, I'm through.
Next week I'm going to marry a fellow,
And I don't mind telling you, I'm in luck.
He works in a restrunt on Girard avenue,
So he won't ever be home to meals.

TIT FOR TAT

I OFTEN pass a gracious tree
Whose name I can't identify,
But still I bow, in courtesy;
It waves a bough, in kind reply.

I do not know your name, O tree
(Are you a hemlock or a pine?)
But why should that embarrass me?
Quite probably you don't know mine.

THE TWINS

CON was a thorn to brother Pro—
On Pro we often sicked him:
Whatever Pro would claim to know
Old Con would contradict him!

NURSERY RHYMES FOR THE
TENDER-HEARTED

(Dedicated to Don Marquis.)

I

SCUTTLE, scuttle, little roach—
How you run when I approach:
Up above the pantry shelf,
Hastening to secrete yourself.

Most adventurous of vermin,
How I wish I could determine
How you spend your hours of ease,
Perhaps reclining on the cheese.

Cook has gone, and all is dark—
Then the kitchen is your park:
In the garbage heap that she leaves
Do you browse among the tea leaves?

How delightful to suspect
All the places you have trekked:
Does your long antenna whisk its
Gentle tip across the biscuits?

HIDE AND SEEK

NURSERY RHYMES—(continued)

Do you linger, little soul,
Drowsing in our sugar bowl?
Or, abandonment most utter,
Shake a shimmy on the butter?

Do you chant your simple tunes
Swimming in the baby's prunes?
Then, when dawn comes, do you slink
Homeward to the kitchen sink?

Timid roach, why be so shy?
We are brothers, thou and I.
In the midnight, like yourself,
I explore the pantry shelf!

II

ROCKABYE, insect, lie low in thy den,
Father's a cockroach, mother's a hen.
And Betty, the maid, doesn't clean up the sink,
So you shall have plenty to eat and to drink.

Hushabye, insect, behind the mince pies:
If the cook sees you her anger will rise;
She'll scatter poison, as bitter as gall,
Death to poor cockroach, hen, baby and all.

III

THREE was a gay henroach, and what do you think,
She lived in a cranny behind the old sink—
Eggshells and grease were the chief of her diet;
She went for a stroll when the kitchen was quiet.

She walked in the pantry and sampled the bread,
But when she came back her old husband was dead:
Long had he lived, for his legs they were fast,
But the kitchen maid caught him and squashed him at last.

HIDE AND SEEK

IV

I KNEW a black beetle, who lived down a drain,
And friendly he was though his manners were
plain;

When I took a bath he would come up the pipe,
And together we'd wash and together we'd wipe.

Though mother would sometimes protest with a sneer
That my choice of a tub-mate was wanton and queer,
A nicer companion I never have seen:
He bathed every night, so he must have been clean.

Whenever he heard the tap splash in the tub
He'd dash up the drain-pipe and wait for a scrub,
And often, so fond of ablution was he,
I'd find him there floating and waiting for me.

But nurse has done something that seems a great
shame:

She saw him there, waiting, prepared for a game:
She turned on the hot and she scalded him sore
And he'll never come bathing with me any more.

THE SUPERMAN

THE man I give toast to
And praise in this sonnet
Has never played host to
A bee in his bonnet.
Remarkably moderate,
Thoroughly sane,
Indeed odd and odder it
Seems to my brain
So few are inclined to
Give heed to his tone,
But still have a mind to
Fool views of their own.
The wisdom of Sinai is his by the shelf . . .
Of course you divine I—allude to Myself.

HIDE AND SEEK

TO A TELEPHONE OPERATOR WHO HAS A BAD COLD

HOW hoarse and husky in my ear
Your usually cheerful chirrup:
You have an awful cold, my dear—
Try aspirin or bronchial syrup.

When I put in a call to-day
Compassion stirred my humane blood red
To hear you faintly, sadly, say
The number: *Burray Hill dide hudred!*

I felt (I say) quick sympathy
To hear you croak in the receiver—
Will you be sorry too for me
A month hence, when I have hay fever?

MY OWN SPRING SONG

AND now 'tis spring, a lovely scene—
O poplar trees, long, green, and slender:
Alas that all this tender green
Is not a legal tender.

THE URBAN POET

(Requested to supply a spring poem, while his wife, who understands these matters, is away from home.)

WHEN reeks the foetid *symplocarp*
(Or cabbage, frankly known as *skunk*)
And when the frogs, with pipe and harp,
Begin to whistle and to plunk,

I think of yellow marigolds
(They must be yellow, by the name)
And of the bloodroot that unfolds
As bright (presumably?) as flame.

Hepaticas, so frail and ——,
And —— —— —— anemones
That on this —— —— covered bank
Are trembling in the gentle breeze.

The saxifrage, clear —— in hue
(Oh, is it yellow, red or pink?)
The violet's undoubted blue,
The Dutchman's Breeches (mauve, I think?)

THE URBAN POET—(continued)

The lucid willow by the stream
With —— —— catkins of soft fur;
The mountain laurel's —— gleam,
All these are lovely, I aver.

Dear burdock, blossom of my heart,
Upon your petals glad I look;
(I do not know these things apart,
And got their names out of a book.*)

Oh, flowery friends of field and wood,
What pleasure your existence gives. . . .
And honestly, I wish I could
Supply the proper adjectives!

* "Familiar Features of the Roadside," by F. Schuyler Mathews.

MUSINGS ON A COOL RETREAT

I KNOW a little hidden pool
Where happy bathers oft repair;
Secluded, clear and deep and cool,
Men find right brave refreshment there,
And swiftly doffing shirts and panties
They revel blissful—*rari nantes.*

Remote from scenes of toil and teen
All heat and grievance they expunge;
Enjoying in that shimmering green
The swift shock of a silver plunge,
And crying “*O deorum quicquid*
We thank thee for this pool: *some* liquid!”

Sharp glory of that dive, the first—
And thrill (but how can it be told?)
When bodies, slowly falling, burst
Into the all-encircling cold,
Then splash, or float among the ripple
As passive as a participle.

How far away, you will agree,
Must lie that cool and placid grot—

HIDE AND SEEK

MUSINGS ON A COOL RETREAT—(continued)

Amid the Catskill greenery?

Some distant Adirondack spot?

Yet, if you ask where is the place meant—

The Woolworth Building, in the basement!

PART TWO: SONNETS

SONNETS

QUICKENING

SUCH little, puny things are words in rhyme:
Poor feeble loops and strokes as frail as hairs;
You see them printed here, and mark their chime,
And turn to your more durable affairs.
Yet on such petty tools the poet dares
To run his race with mortar, bricks and lime,
And draws his frail stick to the point, and stares
To aim his arrow at the heart of Time.

Intangible, yet pressing, hemming in,
This measured emptiness engulfs us all,
And yet he points his paper javelin
And sees it eddy, waver, turn, and fall,
And feels, between delight and trouble torn,
The stirring of a sonnet still unborn.

AT A WINDOW SILL

TO WRITE a sonnet needs a quiet mind. . . .
I paused and pondered, tried again. To
write. . . .

Raising the sash, I breathed the winter night:
Papers and small hot room were left behind.
Against the gusty purple, ribbed and spined
With golden slots and vertebræ of light
Men's cages loomed. Down sliding from a height
An elevator winked as it declined.

Coward! There is no quiet in the brain—
If pity burns it not, then beauty will:
Tinder it is for every blowing spark.
Uncertain whether this is bliss or pain
The unresting mind will gaze across the sill
From high apartment windows, in the dark.

THE RIVER OF LIGHT

I. Broadway, 103rd to 96th.

LIGHTS foam and bubble down the gentle grade:
Bright shine chop sueys and rôtisseries;
In pink translucence glowingly displayed
See camisole and stocking and chemise.
Delicatessen windows full of cheese—
Above, the chimes of church-bells toll and fade—
And then, from off some distant Palisade
That gluey savor on the Jersey breeze!

The burning bulbs, in green and white and red,
Spell out a *Change of Program Sun., Wed., Fri.,*
A clicking taxi spins with ruby spark.
There is a sense of poising near the head
Of some great flume of brightness, flowing by
To pour in gathering torrent through the dark.

II. Below 96th.

The current quickens, and in golden flow
Hurries its flotsam downward through the night—
Here are the rapids where the undertow
Whirls endless motors in a gleaming flight.
From blazing tributaries, left and right,
Influent streams of blue and amber grow.
Columbus Circle eddies: all below
Is pouring flame, a gorge of broken light.

See how the burning river boils in spate,
Channeled by cliffs of insane jewelry,
Painting a rosy roof on cloudy air—
And just about ten minutes after eight,
Tossing a surf of color to the sky
It bursts in cataracts upon Times Square!

SONNETS

IN AN AUCTION ROOM

(*Letter of John Keats to Fanny Brawne, Anderson Galleries, March 15, 1920.*)

To Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach.

*H*OW about this lot? said the auctioneer;
One hundred, may I say, just for a start?
Between the plum-red curtains, drawn apart,
A written sheet was held. . . . And strange to hear
(Dealer, would I were steadfast as thou art)
The cold quick bids. (*Against you in the rear!*)
The crimson salon, in a glow more clear
Burned bloodlike purple as the poet's heart.

Song that outgrew the singer! Bitter Love
That broke the proud hot heart it held in thrall—
Poor script, where still those tragic passions
move—

Eight hundred bid: fair warning: the last call:
The soul of Adonais, like a star. . . .
Sold for eight hundred dollars—Doctor R.!

EPITAPH FOR A POET WHO WROTE NO POETRY

"It is said that a poet has died young in the breast
of the most stolid."—Robert Louis Stevenson.

WHAT was the service of this poet? He
Who blinked the blinding dazzle-rays that
run

Where life profiles its edges to the sun,
And still suspected much he could not see.
Clay-stopped, yet in his taciturnity
There lay the vein of glory, known to none;
And moods of secret smiling, only won
When peace and passion, time and sense, agree.

Fighting the world he loved for chance to brood,
Ignorant when to embrace, when to avoid
His loves that held him in their vital clutch—
This was his service, his beatitude;
This was the inward trouble he enjoyed
Who knew so little, and who felt so much.

TO A VAUDEVILLE TERRIER
SEEN ON A LEASH, IN THE PARK

THREE times a day—at two, at seven, at nine—
O terrier, you play your little part:
Absurd in coat and skirt you push a cart,
With inner anguish walk a tight-rope line.
Up there, before the hot and dazzling shine
You must be rigid servant of your art,
Nor watch those fluffy cats—your doggish heart
Might leap and then betray you with a whine!

But sometimes, when you've faithfully rehearsed,
Your trainer takes you walking in the park,
Straining to sniff the grass, to chase a frog.
The leash is slipped, and then your joy will burst—
Adorable it is to run and bark,
To be—alas, how seldom—just a dog!

TO A BURLESQUE SOUBRETTE

UPSTAGE the great high-shafted beefy choir
Squawked in 2000 watts of orange glare—
You came, and impudent and deuce-may-care
Danced where the gutter flamed with footlight fire.

Flung from the roof, spots red and yellow burned
And followed you. The blatant brassy clang
Of instruments drowned out the words you sang,
But goldenly you capered, twirled and turned.

Boyish and slender, child-limbed, quick and proud,
A sprite of irresistible disdain,
Fair as a jonquil in an April rain,
You seemed too sweet an imp for that dull crowd. . . .

And then, behind the scenes, I heard you say,
“*O Gawd, I got a hellish cold to-day!*”

SONNETS

SONNETS OF A GEOMETER

THE CIRCLE

FEW things are perfect: we bear Eden's scar;
Yet faulty man was godlike in design
That day when first, with stick and length of twine,
He drew me on the sand. Then what could mar
His joy in that obedient mystic line;
And then, computing with a zeal divine,
He called π 3-point-14159
And knew my lovely circuit $2 \pi r$!

A circle is a happy thing to be—
Think how the joyful perpendicular
Erected at the kiss of tangency
Must meet my central point, my avatar!
They talk of 14 points: yet only 3
Determine every circle: Q. E. D.

SONNETS IN TIME OF TRIAL

(See *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act I, Scene 5,
lines 35-36.)

I

QUEER! there was no premonitory twitch,
No twangling of my nerves, to advertise
All you would mean to me: contrariwise,
Full-blown your passion seized me: passion which
Made our relation so supremely rich
In yearning, wild remorses, and surprise.
And yet I uttered hardly any cries
When Pain danced tiptoe in her pallid niche.

O bitter my immedicable woe—
And must I lose you? Ah, I could not tell!
Chimerical seemed life and love and youth.
I never knew that I could suffer so
Until I ate that chocolate caramel
And throbbed with you, O sorely stricken tooth!

SONNETS

II

I felt that crumbling, teetering thrill again :
Life was a nausea, earth a black disgrace ;
The sunlight was offensive to my face ;
Man, made of mud, and conducted for pain.
I longed to probe through tissue, nerve and vein
And with some thin, sharp instrument to chase
This lurking fiend of torment from his place
And free the devil tugging at his chain.

A shaking, shuddering pang, and I was shent ;
It seemed to split my skull, without a warning ;
I thought : I hope I'll soon be dead, by Jove !
I took my hat and stick, and out I went.
The druggist, as I bought some oil of clove,
Said, "What a jolly, sunny Sunday morning!"

TO AN OLD FRIEND

(For Lloyd Williams.)

I LIKE to dream of some established spot
Where you and I, old friend, an evening through
Under tobacco's fog, streaked gray and blue,
Might reconsider laughters unforgot.
Beside a hearth-glow, golden-clear and hot,
I'd hear you tell the oddities men do.
The clock would tick, and we would sit, we two—
Life holds such meetings for us, does it not?

Happy are men when they have learned to prize
The sure unvarnished virtue of their friends,
The unchanged kindness of a well-known face:
On old fidelities our world depends,
And runs a simple course in honest wise,
Not a mere taxicab shot wild through space!

THOUGHTS WHILE PACKING A TRUNK

THE sonnet is a trunk, and you must pack
With care, to ship frail baggage far away;
The octet is the trunk; sestet, the tray;
Tight, but not overloaded, is the knack.
First, at the bottom, heavy thoughts you stack,
And in the chinks your adjectives you lay—
Your phrases, folded neatly as you may,
Stowing a syllable in every crack.

Then, in the tray, your daintier stuff is hid:
The tender quatrain where your moral sings—
Be careful, though, lest as you close the lid
You crush and crumple all these fragile things.
Your couplet snaps the hasps and turns the key—
Ship to The Editor, marked C. O. D.

THE TWO-MAN SAW

The rocking, ringing steel sings to and fro,
A steady buzz, a whang and rasp and hiss;
The sawdust spurts and makes twin piles below;
Green wood is tough.

The art is chiefly this:

Don't bear too hard, but leave it to the saw,
(Sam holds the other end, and knows the knack);
Pull firmly, but still lightly, on the draw,
But do not push. Your partner takes it back.

Then, when your rhythm's easy, going well,
And back-arm muscles twinge a bit, mayhap,
Swayed in a kind of dogged swoon, you'll smell
That lusty savor of hot sun on sap.
"Well, Sam, your saw, she swings a wicked
tooth." . . .
The trunk is through. Sam grins. "You said the
truth!"

SONNETS

A SONNET ON OYSTERS

(Dedicated to Grif Alexander, in honor of a barrel
that came from Green Holly Creek, Patuxent
River, Maryland.)

TO tell the truth, I really never knew
What oysters were, until, one night this week,
A barrel came up from Green Holly Creek
And Grif set up a supper for the crew.
First, on the shell, most glorious to view,
Their little sacks, distent and soft and sleek,
Dribbled with acid lemon-juice, and eke
Bill's home-made ketchup. . . . And then came the
stew!

A stew, I say, since rhyme must needs be sung,
Though, to be factual, the 'valves were panned—
And then, the Colonel's gorgeous bowl of punch.
O zesty broth, serene upon the tongue,
And ginger cookies, baked by Jim's wife's hand,
The night Grif broached that barrel for the bunch!

IN PHILADELPHIA

I

I HAVE seen sunsets gild the pillared steam
Where Broad Street Station hoops with arches
dark

The western fire; and seen the looming, stark
Crags of the Hall grow soft in morning gleam.

One drowsy eve I wandered far to mark
The Neck, a land of opal color-scheme;
And know no fairer place to watch and dream
Than on a bench in old Penn Treaty Park.

And there are corners, glimpses, houses, streets,
With curious satisfaction in the view,
And unconfessed sweet moments when one meets
The destiny of human life anew.
A city rarely beautiful I know
It is not men alone who make it so.

SONNETS

II

I have seen streets where strange enchantment broods :
Old ruddy houses where the morning shone
In seemly quiet on their tranquil moods ,
Across the sills white curtains outward blown.
Their marble steps were scoured as white as bone
Where scrubbing housemaids toiled on wounded
knee—

And yet, among all streets that I have known
These placid byways give least peace to me.

In such a house, where green light shining through
(From some back garden) framed her silhouette
I saw a girl, heard music blithely sung.
She stood there laughing in a dress of blue,
And as I went on, slowly, there I met
An old, old woman, who had once been young.

TO MY WIFE

WHO else, dear eyes of brown, could know or
dream
Our thousand foolish tender little ways?
Absurdities and trifles though they seem,
They are the salt and savor of our days!
They are too quaint and too ridiculous
To name them here, or publicly explain;
For what is deep significance to us
Would, to the general, prove quite insane!
And I, who must be prim ten hours a day
And talk choplogic, and seem wise, severe—
How blithely do I cast pretence away
And whisper sheerest moonshine in your ear!
Your laughter is so sweet, it strikes me dumb
To think how suddenly life's partings come.

HOSTAGES

"He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune."—BACON.

A YE, Fortune, thou hast hostage of my best!
A I, that was once so heedless of thy frown,
Have armed thee cap-à-pie to strike me down,
Have given thee blades to hold against my breast.
My virtue, that was once all self-possessed,
Is parceled out in little hands, and brown
Bright eyes, and in a sleeping baby's gown:
To threaten these will put me to the test.

Sure, since there are these pitiful poor chinks
Upon the makeshift armor of my heart,
For thee no honor lies in such a fight!
And thou wouldst shame to vanquish one, methinks,
Who came awake with such a painful start
To hear the coughing of a child at night!

PART THREE: TRANSLATIONS FROM
THE CHINESE

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE CHINESE

DEDICATED
WITHOUT HIS PERMISSION
To
WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE CHINESE

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

It is with some reluctance that I accede to the publisher's entreaties to put these translations before the world of polite letters. I am painfully aware that my knowledge of Chinese is rather rudimentary, based as it is largely on laundry slips. I cannot help having a suspicion that there are a good many of the 40,000 ideographs with which I am not sufficiently familiar. But my readers will sympathize when they realize the difficulties of the task which I have set myself. It is disconcerting, when spending an evening translating the pearly and beautifully chiselled epigrams of No Sho or P'ur Fish, to find that the character which I thought (by comparison with my collection of laundry slips) must mean *a pair of pyjamas*, would, if so translated, give a regrettably intimate and informal tone to the verse. It is true that relying entirely on this laundry slip glossary somewhat restricts the scope of my translations; and therefore I have not scrupled to do as other devotees of Chinese verse, and when in doubt as to the exact meaning of a phrase I have always translated it *a bowl of jade filled with the milk of the moonlight*.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE—(continued)

Most interesting of all, it will be agreed, is the fact that the translations establish beyond cavil that the authors of these poems are men very much like ourselves. Most of the Chinese poetry that has been translated is of a querulous or bibbing sort: it gives an unfair picture of a high-spirited and proud race, representing them as eternally moaning about maidens with finger-nails shaped like filberts, lotus leaves in the moon-shine, and death by excess of wine. The Chinese poets I here introduce have not been taken up by the poetical coteries, because they are of the more familiar sort; they are the humorists of China, the Chinese colyumists as it were.

Any proceeds from the sale of these translations will be applied to increasing and codifying my collection of laundry slips.

THE TRANSLATOR.

NO SHO

In my translations from No Sho I have tried, though clumsily, to express something of the brooding bitterness that pervades his work. For a long time he was a sort of private colyumist to an eminent mandarin of the P'un dynasty. It was his duty to write, every day, a number of paragraphs, epigrams, wheezes, and ditties, and bring them in the afternoon to his patron's tea house. Here he would read them aloud to the mandarin and his guests as they sat at their wine and watermelon seeds. After each item was read, there would be a little music on the Chinese zither, and the assembled company would discuss the possibility of No Sho's work being taken up by Miss Amy Lowell or Mr. Witter Bynner. One day, however, in a fit of pique because the audience did not sufficiently applaud one of his apothegms, No Sho leaped out of the tea-house into the lake. He did not really intend to destroy himself, but only to give his employer a fright, thinking thereby to get his salary raised; but the water lilies (which are so frequently described in Chinese poetry), were very thick in that pond, and their stems got entwined round his neck, and he perished. It was obvious that his death was not suicide, for he had carefully laid his manuscripts on a bench before jumping, and after the excitement (and the poet) had subsided it was found that among the papers was

NO SHO—(continued)

a stamped addressed envelope directed to Lady Editor, Well Known Pottry Magazine, Chicago. In spite of the utmost efforts of Mr. Burleson, it was not possible to find out who was meant by this; and No Sho's manuscripts were at last sold by the Dead Letter Office; in which way they came to my hands.

SILHOUETTE OF A HUSBAND

LADIES classify husbands
Into two classes:
Those who are "attentive,"
And those who are not.
I fear I am of the latter,
For I never can remember
My home telephone number.

But my friend Chang Jo
Always knows his home number.
He calls up so often to say
"My dear,
I will not be home to dinner this evening."

A BURNING BOSOM

SITTING in this tea-house,
Looking out on the clear cool water
And the silver lilies,
How I wish I could press a dripping lily-pad
On my burning bosom
To ease me of my smart.
A broken heart, you ask, Mar Quong?
No, no, a mustard plaster.

INGRATITUDE

BEARING Walt Whitman in mind,
I intend to say
On my deathbed:
“I regard my poems as
My *carte de visite*
To posterity.”
It is sad to have to add
That posterity will reply
“Not at home.”

PRUDENCE

HELP! Mad dog! cried some one.
Wisdom, I murmured,
Is better than rabies,
And hastened
In the opposite direction.

SAFE AND SANE

MY theology, briefly,
Is that the Universe
Was Dictated
But not Signed.

LEGES SINE MORIBUS VANAEE

THE Ten Commandments
Are not really commandments,
But they are valuable
Suggestions.

RECIPROCATION

ONE good nocturne
Deserves another,
Said George Sand
When she met Chopin.

AN EJACULATION

GENIUS, cried the commuter.
As he ran for the 8.13,
Consists of an infinite capacity
For catching trains.

PANORAMA OF A HAPPY EVENING

Six o'Clock

WHEN the frogs clear their throats
Like old club members,
And the fireflies
Punctuate the dusk with a network of brightness,
Hasten, boy, to His Excellency Mu-Kow,
And ask him to join me
In a trifling merriment.
And be careful
To stretch two white ropes
Along the path,
Lest, when His Excellency totters homeward in
the darkness,
He fall in the canal.

Eight o'Clock

Welcome, Excellency, welcome!
You do me too much honor!
Lay aside your robe and we will sit in the pagoda.
Throw your lip over these pickled sharks' fins.
I pray you, be at your ease:

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE CHINESE

PANORAMA OF A HAPPY EVENING—(continued)

Let this evening be conducted on a high philosophical plane.

The great Confucius, as you were saying, put it neatly:

*Prohibition cannot harm me,
I have wined to-day.*

Nine o'Clock

Yes, Excellency, you have said it:

We live but once.

Boy! Some more of those curried snails!

How warm this moonlight is.

By all means, Excellency, take off your shirt
If you will be more comfortable.

Ten o'Clock

Admirable, admirable!

To speak sooth, Excellency, I had no idea
That you could do the Shan-Tung saraband
with such spirit.

But—you will pardon me for mentioning it—
Let me clear away the broken glassware
Before you dance barefoot on the table.

The Emperor would never forgive me
If you should wound yourself—

Yes, I can see you perfectly from here.
It is very comfortable here, under the table.

PANORAMA OF A HAPPY EVENING—(continued)

Eleven o'Clock

Boy, boy! Make haste!
I *begged* His Excellency to tread with care.
Woe is me! His Excellency insisted on catch-
ing a cool, slippery eel
To lay against his heated forehead.
Hasten, boy, hasten!
His Excellency
Has fallen into the canal.

CERTAINTY

HOW is it that human beings
Are so certain of everything?
Every man will tell you, fiercely,
That he has bought far more lunches
For other men
Than have been bought for him.
And yet, mathematically,
That cannot be so.

CONFESSTION

WHENEVER I meet a handsome man
I have an irresistible impulse
To look at the nearest mirror
The most satisfying form of art
Is contrast.

ONE OF MANY

THE man who told me
He invented indirect lighting
Was a liar.
How about the moon?

HANDICAPPED

LIFE is a game of whist
Between Man and Nature
In which Nature knows all Man's cards.
Well, suppose I try you out on trumps,
Says Nature,
Leading the mating instinct.

THE CODE

THOSE fireflies sparkling in the willows,
Here, there, here, there;
Those frogs piping in the moonlit pond,
Tweedle, tweedle, tweedle—
There seems to be a persistent method in it.
What is the code?
Is Nature trying to get across some message to me?

THE POINT OF VIEW

WHEN the birch tree was cut down
The birds came and sat on the trunk
And gossiped.
In this tree I found the largest caterpillar I ever
ate,
Said the robin.
In this tree I met my first wife,
Said the wren.

THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT

ONE of the penalties
Of being a human being
Is
Other human beings.

ADVICE

NEVER try to tell people anything
Unless
They know it already.
Even then,
It is well to refrain.

FALSE COLORS

DO not be alarmed by the truculence
Of my poems.
I myself am timid, dilatory,
Fond of plenty of gravy,
And I hate liquor.
My motto is, the velvet hand
In the iron glove.

WHILE IN THE MOOD

IF there is any kind of poetry
I haven't written,
You might tell me about it,
And I'll do some.

P'UR FISH

This great poet, who is known to us only by his nickname (given him by his contemporaries because he insisted on writing in rhyme, when most Chinese poetry, as is well known, is in free verse), perished in the Bolshevik massacres during the P'un dynasty. He was a Mandarin of the old school, and his *Critique of Pure Treason* enraged the republicans of that day. He amused himself by poking fun at the other poets of his time, particularly those who gathered in societies and sodalities and sororities for the purpose of admiring one another's trifles. This was very nearly fatal to his fame. Only the pungent and terse wit of his verses has kept them alive.

TO THE BROWNING SOCIETY OF SHANGHAI

BE cruel to poets, and don't let them think
You like their preposterous patterns in ink;
For poets write better when not overfed:
The time to praise poets is after they're dead.

POETS EASILY CONSOLED

THE anguishes of poets are
Less grim than other men's, by far:
When other men can only curse,
The poet puts his woes in verse.
And Yee Lee, though at first the pang was smart
When by his friend Wu Wu his bride was stolen,
Soon asked which best expressed a broken heart,
A dash, a comma, or a semi-colon?

AN ARISTOCRAT OF THE P'UN DYNASTY

JUST as the beheading was all ready to begin,
“What was *your* offence?” they asked the ancient mandarin.
The mandarin smiled grimly, as on his knees he sank
“My offence?” he whispered: “Ah, my offence is—
rank.”

THE ASTRONOMER TO HIS MISTRESS

THOU art my earth, and I thy moon,
In orbit ever true to thee:
O grant thy planet may come soon
To his ecstatic perigee.

AUTUMN COLORS

HOW tedious it seems, and strange,
That poets should be raving still
Of autumn tints: it's just the change
From chlorophyll to xanthophyll.

PO LIL CHILE

Po Lil Chile is one of the few female poets of China. In regard to poetry the position of women in the Flowery Republic is very different from the status of lady poets in our own dear country. In fact, it is considered positively unseemly for ladies to publish their verses, and Miss Chile's suitor, Woof Woof, broke off the engagement when her volume *Chinese Chintzes* appeared. It is rather pathetic that Miss Chile, in many of her verses, represents herself as a married lady; this, shrewd commentators have said, shows how deeply she deplored that her Art (which she always spells with a capital), has sundered her from the happiness of domestic 'normalcy.' Other critics have said that this is purely cynical on her part; and that she knew very well that a Broken Heart was the first and most essential asset of a female poet.

THE PIPE OF PEACE

WHAT is the magic
Of a corncob pipe?

No matter how peevish or irritable
My husband may be,

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE CHINESE

THE PIPE OF PEACE—(continued)

When he is smoking his Missouri meerschaum
He will do anything I ask.
Couldn't something about corncob pipes
Be put in
The marriage ceremony?

SHELF DECEPTION

O N virtue all my soul is bent,
For though to err is surely human,
Some day (quite soon) I will repent,
Return the books that I've been lent,
And make myself an honest woman.

SAI WEN

Through no fault of his own, Sai Wen's life was marred by tragedy. While a credulous small boy he happened to read a history of the United States, such as is used in American schools. This had carelessly been left lying about by a missionary. One chapter of this volume was called "The Gospel of Americanism," and it inflamed the youth's imagination to such an extent that he conceived the notion that the United States was the only truly happy, virtuous, comfortable and idealistic country on earth. He immediately subscribed to a number of memory, will-power and Chautauqua reading courses, and made haste to come to America. Alas, his disillusion was painful and prompt. One evening he strayed into the New York subway at the rush hour. The next day he returned to his native land, asserting that he was 100 per cent, Chinese. He is now the leader of the Damyurize party in China, which hopes to pass legislation excluding all Americans from that happy country.

IN A VISITORS' BOOK

MY favorite kind of scenery
Is brown eyes;
My chosen form of endeavor
Is peeling the froth
From the top of the tankard.

FRUSTRATION

A MAN I knew by sight
And also by hearing
Said, "I have a good story
For you."
After I got around the corner
I thought what I should have said:
"That is not a story,
It is an heirloom."
I hurried after him,
But he was gone.

DENY YOURSELF

IF you haven't any ideas
Don't worry.
You can get along without them—
Many of the nicest people do.

REFLECTION

WOMEN use shop windows to look through,
Admiring the goods displayed.
Men use them to look at,
Finding them agreeable
As mirrors.

THOUGHT ON CONVERSING WITH A PROMINENT STATESMAN

IT is all right for a man
To be absent-minded,
But his mind shouldn't overstay
Its leave of absence.

QUERY

WHO can alleviate
The joy of a social worker
Alleviating
The sorrows of the poor?

[ACID EJACULATION

IT is always those
To whom you are kindest
Who anoint your heels
With banana peel.

CHU PEP-SIN

This hitherto unknown satirist is said to have been a prince of Tartar blood. He came to the United States in the guise of a Chinese laundryman, and in that humble capacity became a shrewd observer of certain phases of American life. After some years in Philadelphia he returned to China. Some of his comments on American civilization are regrettably acid. We have chosen only the milder accents of his muse for quotation here.

THE POWER HOUSE

EVERY day I go past
The power house on Ludlow Street.
I look in the open windows
And see the great dynamos on their shelves.
They have power enough
To jazz the earth
And throw the planets out of step,
But they make no sound.

THE POWER HOUSE—(continued)

I saw a girl with shell goggles
Dusting some of them, unterrified
By her proximity
To such dangerous engines.
Look out, child, *look out!*
Don't get too near the Bernard Shaw circuit-
breaker
Or the Walt Whitman flywheel!

ON A PAIR OF SPATS LAID AWAY FOR THE
SUMMER

LITTLE spats,
Down among the summer mothballs
Do you hanker for the time
When you will once more
Encase her bright ankles
As they glimmer up and down
Chestnut street?
Your gain will be our loss,
But don't be dogs in the manger,
Little spats!

THIS INCONSTANCY IS SUCH

CHESTNUT STREET is dark and gloomy
11:30 p. m.

But from an upper window
Comes the insane ecstasy of jazz.
Cling-cling of little bells,
Rattle of drums,
Tick-tock of the gourds,
Crash of cymbals,
Wail of violins on the placid night.
Life is tragic;
Life is damnable;
But I do a little scamper of my own
There on the pavement.

POVERTY

POVERTY is always pathetic!

I passed the house of a certain poor man
And looking through the window I saw
Persian rugs, crystal chandeliers, a mahogany talk-
ing machine,
Cut-glass bonbon dish, pearl-inlaid tables, porce-
lain bric-a-brac,
Platinum ash trays, silver toothpick vase, morocco
bound telephone directory,

POVERTY—(continued)

Gold-plated peanut sheller, electric Pomeranian dog-washer,
And not a single book.
Is there no charitable organization
To help this poor pauper?

MISDIRECTED ZEAL

WHEN I am at work in the office
A kind of palsy seizes on my soul.
I feel the whole weight of the universe
Crushing down on my defenseless spirit;
But when I get home at night
And it is time to go to bed,
I am as brisk as a ticket seller
In the box office of a vaudeville show.
In the sheer lustihood of my exuberance
I rearrange all the bottles in the medicine closet,
And with the zeal of Russell Conwell
Delivering "Acres of Diamonds" for the 5000th
time,
I have been known to pursue a cockroach
From one end of the apartment to the other.

FRUSTRATION

I HAVE given up bathing.
The doctor told me to go down to Atlantic City
And snuff up the salt water.
He said it would be good for hay fever.
But every time I wade out to the breakers
And dip my head under the water
A life guard dashes at me
And drags me in.
The next day I see my name in the paper—
“Saved From the Surf,”
And the life insurance company
Threatens to cancel my policy.

ON WATCHING MY STENOGRAPHER

IF only the mechanism of society
Were as simple as a typewriter,
And the management of affairs
Could be transposed
From Capital to Lower Case
By pressing a shift key!

A PLACID DISPOSITION

I CAN always keep my temper
When I'm alone.
It's only other folks
That rile me.

A DISCOVERY

THE worst moment
In my life
Is when I am cleaning up the cellar
And find my magenta tie,
Three frayed soft collars,
And the dear old brown pair of trousers
In the trash-box
Where my wife put them.

BREAKING THE RULES

I KNOW a merchant
Who is an offence to all Rotarians.
He began business on a shoestring,
And yet he is not successful.

O B' OI

Little is known of the life of O B'oi, who was a timid recluse, much persecuted by the authorities for his satirical volume entitled *The Confusions of Confucius*. It is said that at one time he was a columnist on a newspaper in Shanghai, but was dismissed for telling his employer that 20 taels per annum was but a niggardly wage. He was the Kant of China.

THOUGHTS OF A MIDDLE-AGED
MANDARIN

BREAKING in a new idea
Is like breaking in a new pipe:
Uncomfortable work.
I like the old familiar thoughts,
No bite or parch.

BUDDHIST LULLABY

MY mind is an apartment.
When it is all dark,
And I am about to sleep,
Who is that walking
On the floor overhead?

THE REELING BRAIN

MY mind is a movie film.
Who the camera man was,
I don't know,
But he certainly shot
Some queer pictures.
I always fear
That some day the film will snap
And the audience
Will applaud ironically.

CONFUCIUS CONFUSED

I'VE been taking dictation
From the universe
For quite a while.
I've got a bunch of notes:
Now it's time to transcribe them.
Queer—
I can't seem
To make sense out of them.

CAUTION

MY mind needs no fire escape.
It is equipped with automatic sprinklers.

As soon as an idea catches fire
They put it out.
I am heavily insured against
Inflammatory notions.

STEAM SHOVEL NEEDED

MY mind is like the Panama Canal.
Great ocean-going ideas
Lie moored in the locks
Until my thought rises to the level
Where they can proceed.
Every now and then
There is a brainslide in the Culebra Cut
And all traffic is halted.

NEAP PLUS ULTRA

MY mind is like the ocean.

My friends are children playing on the beach.

They bring their little tin buckets

And make patterns on the sand.

Once a strong swimmer ventured out

As far as the breakers.

He turned back.

He was afraid of the undertow.

ANNOUNCEMENT

MY mind is closed pending repairs.

After alterations are completed,

Will reopen in these premises

With a large line of plain and fancy goods.

FINIS CORONAT CORONAM

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW

AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS

WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN
THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY
WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH
DAY AND TO \$1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY
OVERDUE.

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